

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 4697

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, EAID, BG

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MAJOR FAROOK RAHMAN

REF: DACCA 4655

1. MAJOR FAROOK RAHMAN, A KEY ORGANIZER OF THE COUP THAT TOPPLED SHEIKH MUJIB ON AUGUST 15, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR LAST EVENING (SEPTEMBER 22) AT HIS REQUEST AND WITH POLITICAL COUNSELLOR ALSO PRESENT. FAROOK EXPLAINED THAT HE HAS BEEN CALLING ON SEVERAL MISSIONS (HE REFERRED TO TALKS WITH IBRD REPRESENTATIVE AND JAPANESE AMBASSADOR) TO INSTRUCT HIMSELF REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS THEY ARE SUPPORTING AND TO LEARN IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT BE REMEDIED BY HIS INFORMAL INTERVENTION AS AN UNOFFICIAL MEMBER OF THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF. AMBASSADOR REVIEWED EVOLUTION AND PRESENT CONTENT OF OUR AID PROGRAM STRESSING THAT WHILE OUR CONTRIBUTIONS IN IMMEDIATE POST-HOSTILITIES PERIOD WERE TO WIDE-SPECTRUM RELIEF AND REHABILITATION EFFORTS, OUR PROGRAM IS NOW MORE NARROWLY FOCUSSED ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION PLANNING.

2. FOROOK RESPONDED THAT THE PRESIDENT IS PARTICULARLY
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INTERESTED IN THE AGRICULTURAL FIELD AND PLANS TO RELEASE
A NEW AGRICULTUREN POLICY ON SEPTEMBER 24. (FAROOK ALSO

NOTED THAT AN ECONOMIC POLICY IS IN THE PROCESS OF FORMULATION, BUT DID NOT INDICATE A DATE FOR ITS RELEASE.) HE WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT HE SEES THE NEED FOR A VARIETY OF MORE SPECIFIC, SMALLER TYPES OF ASSISTANCE. HE MADE MUCH OF CONTINUING TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS (STRESSING THE NEED FOR LIGHTERING VESSELS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR ROAD AND RAIL TRANSPORT), THE NEED FOR HELP IN BUILDING DACCA'S NEW AIRPORT, THE URGENT NEED FOR A PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL, AIDS FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION EFFORTS, AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR DESTITUTE. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT WE WOULD ALWAYS GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO ANY PROPOSALS MADE BY BDG AND NOTED THAT WE WERE IN CONTUING DIALOGUE WITH PLANNING COMMISSION AND OTHER AGENCIES; NEVERTHELESS, WE HAD COME TO OUR PRESENT EMPHASIS DEGIBERATELY AND WOULD PROBABLY WANT TO CONTINUE OUR STRESS IN THESE TWO KEY AREAS.

3. SPEAKING OF THE NEW REGIME'S PLANS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS, FAROOK STRESSED NEED TO HALT CORRUPTION AND RESTORE INTERNAL SECURITY. ASKED ABOUT THE NUMBER OF ARMS RECOVERED DURING THE SEPTEMBER6-13 AMNESTY PERIOD, HE CANDIDLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY HAD BEEN SMALL. HE WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTED TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN ABOUT SIX MONTHS' TIME, DEPENDING ON THEIR SUCCESS IN RECOVERING ILLEGAL WEAPONS AND THEREBY REMOVING THE THREAT OF INTIMIDATION AGAINST THE VOTERS. (REMINDING THAT BY-ELECTIONS TO VACANT PARLIAMENTARY SEATS HAD JUST BEEN BANNED FOR SIX MONTHS, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE WAS NOT SURE WHETHER IT WOULD SIMPLY BE BY-ELECTIONS WHICH WOULD BE HELD AFTER SIX MONTHS OR WHETHER ELECTIONS TO A NEW PARLIAMENT WERE PLANNED.) FAROOK THEN SAID THAT ON OCT. 3, THE OCCASION OF SHAB-E-QADR (THE NIGHT ON WHICH THE HOLY QURAN WAS REVEALED), THE PRESIDENT IS PLANNING TO AMNESTY 5,000 PERSONS NOW HELD IN PRISON; THOSE RELEASED WOULD INCLUDE SO-CALLED COLLABORATORS BUT WOULD EXCLUDE PERSONS FOUND GUILTY OF CRIMES SUCH AS MURDER, ARMED ROBBERY, RAPE AND OTHERS INVOLVING VIOLENCE OR THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE.

4. COMMENT. MAJOR FAROOK PROVED AN ENGAGING YOUNG MAN, COMBINING MODESTY OR AT LEAST LACK OF ARROGANCE ABOUT HIS
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OWN ROLE WITH NAIVETE ABOUT FOREIGN AID. IN COMMENTING ON HIS OWN FUTURE, HE SAID THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUE AND BROTHER-IN-LAW MAJOR RASHID RECOGNIZE THAT THEY WILL HAVE TOAZGO OUT" (I.E., LEAVE THE COUNTRY) AFTER A TIME. "I COULD ONLY GO BACK TO THE ARMY AS A BRIGADIER", HE SAID, OBVIOUSLY REFERRING TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF AUGUST 15, BUT HE ADDED THAT THE REALITY OF ARMY LIFE PRECLUDES THIS. NEVERTHELESS, AFTER AUGUST 15, THERE COULD BE NO RETURN FOR HIM TO A SUBORDINATE COMMAND, HE SAID, AND THUS A POSTING AS A MILITARY ATTACHE WOULD PROBABLY BE THE BEST SOLUTION. ASKED WHETHER

HE MIGHT BE APPOINTED A SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT,
FAROOK REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE, NOTING THAT HE CAN BEST
PLAY AN INFORMAL ROLE. HE DID MAKE THE POINT, HOWEVER,
THAT HIS OFFICE WAS DIRECTLY NEXT TO THE PRESIDENT'S AT
BANGABHABAN.
BOSTER

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